

Association Between Employment Status and Quality of Life for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disability (IDD)

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■ A QUICK LOOK:

This study explores the connection between type of employment and quality of life for individuals with IDD. Researchers had 27 adults with IDD complete quality of life surveys. The adult's employment statuses included individuals employed in competitive integrated employment (CIE), sheltered work-center employment, and unemployment. For the individuals employed in CIE or sheltered employment, participants completed the National Core Indicators (NCI) in-person survey on work. The survey asked participants to report on: type of paid job, bi-weekly hours, wage, length of employment, paid time off, if community employment was a goal in the individual's service plan, attendance in classes or trainings, attendance to a day program or workshop, and if individuals volunteer in their community. The participants reported on their quality of life using these two measures Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale - Intellectual/Cognitive Disability (5th Edition; ComQoL-15; Cummins, 1997a) and The PWI-ID (Personal Well-being Index - Intellectual Disability; 3rd Edition).

■ KEY FINDINGS:

- Participants employed through CIE earned a higher average wage than the sheltered- work center group.
- Individuals employed in competitive employment settings in the community reported higher overall quality of life than their peers who work in a sheltered work setting or are unemployed.
- The CIE group demonstrated statistically significant gains in material well-being, indicating that individuals in competitive integrated employment were better able to afford basic necessities, support themselves, and buy items to meet their basic needs (food, shelter, etc).
- All participants reported low participation and engagement in the community regardless of type of employment.
- Study participants with competitive jobs had significantly better productivity scores, meaning they feel they are using their time and energy well.

■ PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE:

Individuals with IDD in competitive integrated employment experience higher objective and subjective quality of life. Policy should expand funding and access to the support services necessary for gaining and sustaining CIE. Individuals with disabilities should have expanded access for involvement in both their workplaces and communities. Results of this study suggest that individuals who participate in CIE receive greater benefits to their quality of life and ability to support themselves than participants who do not work or work in sheltered work. However, regardless of employment status, community participation was low. Supporting individuals with disabilities to access and engage in their community is an important next step for research.

■ NEXT STEPS:

It is important for future research to explore how going to work impacts quality of life for individuals with disabilities. This research indicates that CIE has greater benefits than other types of employment. Policy and funding initiatives can help to make CIE a priority rather than one of many options for employment.

■ LEARN MORE: <https://idd.vcurrctc.org/research/rs2.cfm>

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